



Embassy of the United States of America *Port Louis, Mauritius*

OP-ED

By U.S. Ambassador Shari Villarosa

Creativity: The Next Generation

Today, April 26, marks World Intellectual Property Day as it coincides with the founding of the World Intellectual Property Organization, otherwise known as WIPO, in 1970. For this year's celebration, WIPO has chosen to focus on "Creativity and the Next Generation." Today we celebrate our inventors, scientists, artists and authors who will blaze trails to new ways of communicating and pursuing our daily lives. While we hear about economic challenges, competition and political unrest in the news, we often forget the truly extraordinary times in which we are living. According to *internetworldstats*, Internet usage has grown from 361 million users in December 2000, to 2.4 billion users in June 2012. That means that about 34 percent of the world's population is connected via the Internet. It means people around the world can collaborate to solve a complex math problem, develop a business presentation, or discover a cure for HIV/AIDs.

It also means governments around the world have an urgent responsibility to clarify, simplify, and enforce the laws and regulations for doing business in each country, including laws pertaining to intellectual property. The world's inventors, entrepreneurs, and computer application designers need to know they can work with colleagues from around the world and that their innovations will enjoy efficient, transparent, and cost-effective legal protection worldwide.

Inventors, scientists, and other creators devote an enormous amount of time and resources to their work. In order to recoup those costs and make a living, they need to be paid for their work - that's what intellectual property rights allow. Patents and copyright protection give inventors and authors exclusive rights to their creations for a limited period of time, so they can benefit financially from their work. That protection, and the incentive it creates for people to devote their time and energy to innovation, is

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so important to the United States that intellectual property protection is included in Article 1 of the U.S. Constitution. The United States is not alone. Many European countries have protected intellectual property rights for hundreds of years and much of the world has committed to protect intellectual property rights (IPR).

Criminals violate intellectual property rights through illegal sales of pirated movies, music, software, and counterfeit name-brand clothing and accessories. IPR protection and enforcement is one of the priority areas of collaboration under the U.S.- Mauritius Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA). The U.S. Government has provided extensive IPR training and consultations to Mauritian public and private sector officials. In addition, in collaboration with local public and private sector agencies, we have sponsored IPR awareness campaigns in Mauritius. The U.S. Embassy, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, also organized a workshop to raise awareness among the various stakeholders in Mauritius of the very serious health risks caused by Counterfeit Medicine.

Mauritius has the good fortune of having a growing cadre of young e-entrepreneurs and software developers. The U.S. Embassy has worked with these creative young people to provide them additional training and networking opportunities in developing applications and utilizing the many tools of social media. Their creativity can pave the way for a better future for Mauritius in the 21st century, but their efforts will not continue if their products and projects, their intellectual property, cannot be protected. IPR protection and enforcement are essential to encouraging the next generation's creativity.

The benefits of strong IPR protection on the socio-economic development of any country are numerous. IPR protection stimulates innovation, encourages transfer of technology, attracts investment in knowledge-based industries, and correlates to national competitiveness. The road may be long, but Mauritius can count on our strong collaboration with our partners, in industry as well as in the public sector, to promote IPR protection and enforcement.

In celebration of World Intellectual Property Day and to honor and encourage our next generation of inventors and creators, we invite every individual to make a particular effort to respect intellectual property rights, and for the government to renew its commitment to clear, simple, and enforceable legal frameworks for doing business, including effective protection of intellectual property rights.

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